

Opening of the workshop on terrestrial fauna surveys databases

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This workshop is about the possibility of a coordinated and integrated database for terrestrial fauna survey data for Western Australia. In 1984, the then Department of Conservation and Environment produced a publication entitled 'A Bibliography and Research Inventory of Vertebrate Fauna in WA'. The introduction set out that 'this Bulletin is primarily aimed at providing assistance for persons and organisations involved in environmental planning, impact assessment and management.' The need for an integrated database is not new, but the urgency to progress the subject increases every year.

Western Australia has a unique assemblage of animals in a fragile environment, and their habitats are continually being eroded. The pressure on those habitats will not diminish, but to an increasing extent the public want to be assured that those pressures do not lead to further reductions in fauna populations. This is a real dilemma for those with management responsibility; there is increasing development pressure but with increasing expectations by the community to know about and protect the fauna being impacted. All of this is in a climate of reduced funding for field surveys by those with specialised knowledge to do so.

Much of the potential for data collection now is by way of fauna surveys as a result of the environmental assessment process. Many of the consultants are responsible in their desire to undertake good work, but for this to really add to our knowledge in an organised and efficient manner there needs to be a partnership between industry and government.

Government should be providing ready access to an integrated database, but it should also be setting the standards for biological surveys. Some of this is set out in a Position Paper released today by the Environmental Protection Authority entitled 'Terrestrial Biological Surveys as an Element of Biodiversity Protection'.

One of the passages from that Position Statement reads 'The EPA intends to encourage the coordinated development of a state-wide database for EPA-related biological surveys in consultation with environmental practitioners and Western Australian natural resource management agencies and authorities.

I am delighted that the Royal Society of Western Australia has arranged for this workshop to be held as part of its function of promoting science. I congratulate the Society on its initiative.

I have pleasure in opening this workshop and wish participants well in their discussions.

' Terrestrial Biological Surveys as an Element of Biodiversity Protection. Position Statement No 3. March 2002. Environmental Protection Authority, Perth. ISBN 0 7307 6674 8, ISSN 1441 1741.